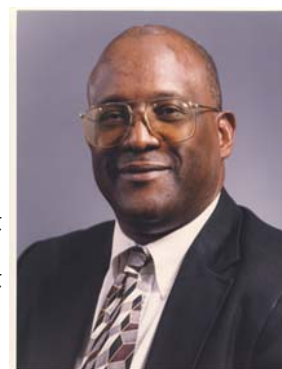


MINNESOTA NRCS

"Conservation is ethically sound. It is rooted in our love of the land, our respect for the rights of others, our devotion to the rule of law."

~Lyndon Baines Johnson

*William Hunt
State Conservationist*



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NRCS will be celebrating the **70 years** of Soil and Water Conservation on April 27, 2005. The theme for the 70th anniversary is "A Partner in Conservation since 1935." During the month of April we plan to release the book which Vic Ruhland has been working on for several years. *"Through these eyes: The First 70 Years of Soil and Water Conservation in Minnesota."*

Each Minnesota NRCS office will receive a copy of this book. I would encourage you to take time to review it's contents. Vic has attempted to record the strong history of conservation that laid the foundation for the conservation ethic and resource accomplishments in Minnesota today. This history from Vic's viewpoint is both interesting and valuable as we move forward with decisions for our future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vic Ruhland for his outstanding volunteer effort in writing this book, and hope you enjoy it!

Additional history about NRCS can be found on the National NRCS website:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/about/history/>

2004 Digital Photography Contest Winners



January-
Winter Wonderland Scenes
Chris Papenfuss



February-
Workforce Diversity
Steve Sellnow



March-
NRCS Employees
Patrick McLoughlin



April-
Rural/Urban
Dave Copeland



May-
Tilling & Planting of our Minnesota Crop
Doug Miller



June-
Soils
Bill Lorenzen



July-
Conservation Practice Construction
Sonia Jacobsen



August-
Minnesota Wildlife
Randy Sheik



September-
Conservation Practices Applied
Marvin Kunkel



October-
The Fall Harvest
Patrick Gehling



November-
Farmers
Brett Coleman



December-
The Conservation Partnership
Janell Holien

The Second MASWCD Friend of Conservation Award is presented to the NRCS

Statements made by LeAnn Buck, MASWCD Executive Director, to Present Bill Hunt, MN State Conservationist, with the MASWCD (Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation District) Friend of Conservation Award.

NRCS continually recognizes SWCDs and our strong partnership. NRCS has worked very hard to promote locally led conservation districts.



At the federal level, NRCS is facing somewhat of a different situation than BWSR. As state funds are being reduced, NRCS has had increases to conservation funding. That doesn't necessarily mean the job has been any easier. You can imagine with new and additional funds, NRCS must receive input and requests from so many agencies and organizations on how to allocate funds, who should receive funds, and a host of other requests.

Two years ago, with the new farm bill, NRCS had to roll out a major conservation cost-share program (EQIP). Minnesota's NRCS didn't have to allocate funding based on SWCD boundaries, but they did. It could have been a state-wide competitive process or allocated different ways.

Minnesota's NRCS recognizes the local partnership and the importance of SWCD Supervisors and their input into identifying local resources issues. Minnesota NRCS and BWSR worked together to become the second state in the nation to receive a Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program - Once again we lead the nation.

Approximately one month ago, NRCS announced another program, the Conservation Security Program. I sent Bill Hunt, NRCS State Conservationist, an e-mail message congratulating him on the roll-out of CSP. I would like to share his reply since it summarizes NRCS and Bill Hunt's philosophy.

"Thanks LeAnn for the compliment — it belongs to ALL members of the MN conservation team. When any one of us "wins" we all win! It's made so much easier when you have great partners such as you district people. Like MASWCD and local Districts we concentrate on environmental outcomes for the entire state of Minnesota."

Federal Women's Program

Sandra Jerzak, Federal Women's Program Manager

The Federal Women's Program in Minnesota is actively promoting employment and advancement of women in the NRCS workforce. Recruitment, encouragement for advancement and retention is a team effort of all NRCS employees. Career coaching and/or mentoring is an excellent way to get involve. Another way is to attend local college career fairs, contact ag-related college professors and high school agriculture teachers are ways to plant the seed that NRCS has various opportunities for their students to inquire. Please if you need assistance to getting career brochures, career ppt presentation or need other assistance, contact your area FWP representative, the ASTC(FO) and the Human Resources Staff.

This years FWP committee members consist of : A-1 Cari Rebischke, A-2 Stanley Musielewicz, A-3 Mary Monte, A-4 Michelle Wohlers (Presently) Melanie Dickman (transferred to SD), A5- Jim Ridler, A-6 Kamara Holmes, A-7 Sue Glende, SO – Leah Duzy (Moore). FWPM – Sandy Jerzak, FWP Alternate: Kamara Holmes, FWP Recorder – Cari Rebischke

FWP will be highlighting the 25th Anniversary of the Multicultural Women's History Movement in March FWP Newsletter. The FWP committee has sent out a survey to their respective areas for comments in looking at NRCS challenges, opportunities and rewards for the FWP Newsletter. Two women outreach events that took place in SW Minnesota recently.

Conservation: A Quilt for Natural Resources:

Water and Life are two threads woven intrinsically together was the theme for a women's luncheon at P.K. Egan's in Canby on February 8, 2005. The Yellow Medicine SWCD and the Lac qui Parle-Yellow Bank Clean Water Partnership worked together to bring this workshop to women in the Canby area. The 27 women participants gain insight of urban and rural conservation practices and their impact on our most valuable resource-Water. The quilt display was utilized to tying the pieces together. "Creative Quilting" by Bonnie also discuss some quilting opportunities. NRCS provided some of the resource materials for this outreach event.

The Lac Qui Parle SWCD and the LQP-YellowBank Clean Water Partnership is hosted a *Wine, Women and Water* event on February 10th at the Quest House in Dawson. A full house of 100 women attended that meeting. Following a sit-down meal, information was shared on protecting our water resources. Sue Roisen was the guest

speaker that talked about her family's decision to grow an alternative crop – grapes. The evening will conclude with tasting Minnesota wines. NRCS provided some of the materials for this meeting. Three NRCS employees supported the event by participating: Beth Collins and Sandy Jerzak. This event captured 100 ladies attention and received many fine compliments.

I would like to recognize Joe McCloskey in his efforts to diversify the soil survey program in MN. Since 2001, 14 individuals have been selected to permanent positions. Of these, 79% are females, minorities and/or handicapped. Congratulations!

Full House for Wine, Women, & Water

Terry Wittnebel

"Excellent meal, Great presentations, All around an excellent evening well spent!" is just one of many positive responses from participants.

One hundred women traveled to Dawson to attend a special event planned just for them, *Wine, Women, & Water*. The event was sponsored by the Lac qui Parle Soil and Water Conservation District and the Lac qui Parle Yellow-Bank Clean Water Partnership. The message of the evening – that the choices we make as consumers and land users impact the quantity and quality of our water – was conveyed in the dinner of locally produced foods as well as the program.

Mary Homan, Lac qui Parle – YellowBank Clean Water Partnership, explained one way we can protect water quality is by choices we make for our lawns and gardens. In reality, those choices are the same as those made for farm fields; the difference is scale.

Sue Roisen, local grape grower, shared her family's decision to try grapes as an alternative crop. She explained the establishment of their vineyard, marketing, and some of their future plans. Susan Brickweg, Entrepreneur's Assistance Network, was introduced. She explained the organization & how she might help individuals make their ideas become reality.

The evening concluded with wine tasting tips and sampling several Minnesota wines. Grapes produced by the Roisens were used in production of 2 of the wines. *"What a great evening!" "Do it again"*, has staff already brainstorming.



February is National Black History Month

by Julie MacSwain



*Kamara Holmes, Soil Scientist
St Peter Area Office*

A Black History event was held at the MN NRCS State Office on Monday, February 28, 2005. This year's theme was "The Niagara Movement 100th Anniversary." The Niagara Movement was a meeting held in July 1905, at Niagara Falls, New York, where African-Americans, led by W.E.B. Dubois, called for full civil liberties and an end to racial discrimination.

Presenters at the Black History Event included: Yamika Stokes, Amy Stratton, William Hunt, Steve Wenzel (Rural Development), Nigatu Tadessi (FSA), Cutrina Moreland, Benjamin Mchie and Kasey Reed. A special thank you to George Montgomery, Black Emphasis Program Manager for his role in setting up the event.

Amy Stratton, MN NRCS CR Chair mentioned the importance that Carter Woodson played in Black History. Back in 1926, Mr. Woodson started "Negro History Week". This signaled the start of celebrating black history.

William Hunt, State Conservationist reminded employees that each and every group in our country has made contributions to our history and success of our country. "Attending an event such as the Black History event is important as it provides each of us with the opportunity of being better", said William Hunt.

The Keynote address was made by *Benjamin Mchie, President/CEO of the African American Registry*. Mr. Mchie's African American Registry is the largest African American History Website in the world. www.aaregistry.com This registry is open 24/7, every day of the year! The website contains calendar-based information with factual historical events and biographies. On the average 1 million hits are made every month on the African American Registry website.

The website provides an opportunity for people to learn more about African American history and utilize the information gained in relating with others. A good way to become familiar with African American history is by checking the www.aaregistry.com website and make it a point to check the website often.

Minnesota State Conservationist Presents to various Partners and Legislators

Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

On February 11, 2005 William Hunt, State Conservationist for NRCS gave a presentation at the MN State Office building near the Minnesota State Capital. The purpose of the presentation was to share with various Conservation Partners, Minnesota Senators and Representatives, information about NRCS. William Hunt, State Conservationist for MN NRCS has been in Minnesota for 10 years.



Assistant State Conservationist (FarmBill), Tim Koehler, seated with MN State Conservationist, William Hunt.

NRCS is the only federal agency which receives appropriations to provide technical assistance through Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The primary focus of NRCS is on working lands. Minnesota NRCS has over 330 employees.

William Hunt's presentation was well received and paved the way for new and improved connections with people who care about conservation in Minnesota.

Could Minnesota be the next California, Texas or Florida???

Tessa Garcia, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager

More Hispanics have begun to call Minnesota home. The following is a list of percentages that show the number of Hispanics that make up the population in the listed county. This information was taken from the 2000 U.S. Census:

Nobles County – 11.2%
Rice County – 5.5%
Watonswan County – 15.2%
Polk County – 4.8%
Kandiyohi County – 8%
Clay County 3.7%
Freeborn County – 6.3%

The US Census Bureau website, www.census.gov shows a complete map of Hispanic population percentages per county in Minnesota.

MN NRCS Civil Rights Committee

Backrow (L to R): Ann English, ASTC Operations and Civil Rights Coordinator; David Wise (AI/AN SEPM); John Anderson (Area 1 CR Rep.); Steve Lutes (Area 2 Rep.); Mark Kulig (Area 7 Rep.); Dennis Reimers (Area 6 Rep. outgoing); Amy Stratton (CR Chair); Mike Taylor (Area 6 Rep.)

Front Row (L to R): George Montgomery (Area 4 Rep and Black SEPM), Shannon Bengtson (Area 3 Rep.); Julie Lindner (Area 3 rep. outgoing); Cutrina Moreland (State Office Rep.); Sandy Jerzak (FWP); Tessa Garcia (Hispanic SEPM); and Mike Walker (Soils Rep.)

Not Pictured: Mark Rose (Area 5 Rep)



Irrigation Water Management Training

Sonia Jacobsen, Hydraulic Engineer

NRCS staff were trained on irrigation water management and checkbook scheduling by Extension Engineer Jerry Wright in two separate sessions, February 9 in Perham and February 16 in St. Cloud.

Conservation practice standard 449 - Irrigation Water Management - is heavily used in parts of Minnesota, and these seminars provided information on using this tool to document practice 449 for EQIP. Thanks to Bob Honeman, Scott A. Smith, Craig Peterson, and John Crellin for their efforts to arrange and host these seminars, and for arranging the NRCS presenters - in some instances themselves.



Viva Las Vegas

2nd National Tribal Districts & Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada

Attended by Dusty Jasken, NRCS White Earth Tribal Liaison

This conference was held to promote awareness between Native Americans and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) agencies and offices. Major issues brought to the table were conservation, education, economic development, and agriculture in Indian Country by the USDA, appropriately the conference was themed "coming together."



Terry Tatsey, Vice Chairman of INCA.

One of the many issues that were hard-pressed during the conference was the lack of knowledge about the USDA by Native Americans, vice versa. The USDA has

17 agencies and 12 offices that address a wide range of resource concerns, including, but not limited to conservation, rural development, research, and food safety. It is of priority for the USDA not to leave out the needs of Native Americans, who happen to belong to some 562 Federally Recognized Tribes and control more than 100 million acres of land in the United States.

Notable conference participants included two organizations striving for greater USDA representation for Native Americans; they included the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance (INCA) and the Oklahoma Tribal Conservation Advisory Council (OTCAC). The goals of these organizations are to help form and operate Tribal Conservation Districts (Tribal Districts) and Tribal Conservation Advisory Councils (Advisory Councils). Through Tribal Districts and Advisory Councils, Native Americans can gain greater access to the USDA via a greater share of USDA funding, increased knowledge of USDA programs, and a "bigger voice" in the USDA decision making process. In turn, USDA agencies and offices learn about Native American working relations, cultural resource issues, and resource priorities. Benefits also include improved USDA agency/office coordination, enhanced government to government relations, and greater USDA program implementation. The benefits generally become mutual through cooperative working agreements. However, working relations do exist in the absence of Tribal District and/or Advisory Councils.

Tribal Districts and Advisory Councils take a grass roots approach toward broadening the constraints between Native American resource concerns and USDA programs, those constraints being a lack of knowledge and lack of exposure to programs. Although they may have the same purpose, Tribal districts and Advisory Councils have their differences. Advisory Councils are composed of members from a broad geographic area, where reservations within a state or a group of states may share and cooperatively address broadly defined resource concerns. Tribal districts on the other hand are more localized and would represent a single reservation where more specific resource concerns would be addressed.

Although Tribal Districts and Advisory Councils sound as though they may be a good way to promote USDA programs to Native Americans facing resource concerns, not all tribes and/or reservations have all the right ingredients to form Tribal Districts or Advisory Councils. Some of the missing ingredients brought up by conference participants included securing a commitment from the governing tribe to form mutual agreements between the tribe and the USDA, trying to find volunteer members who are both interested and qualified, dealing with administrative constraints, securing funding from the governing tribe, and coordination between new and existing efforts to name a few. For those interested, help in establishing a Tribal Districts and/or Advisory Councils is available, but operation, administration, funding, expenses, and selection board members are the responsibility of the governing tribe



Tom Harris, CEO of Alaska Village Initiative, speaking, next to him is the leader of the opening ceremonies.

The above information is not a cumulative breakdown of the conference agenda, nor was it meant to be a persuasion tool. Undoubtedly, each participant took home a different message from this conference, yet the consensus was that Tribal Districts and Advisory Councils have their benefits, but they may not fit all situations. For information on specific examples or contact persons for Tribal Districts or Advisory Councils please contact Dusty Jasken, NRCS – White Earth Tribal Liaison, at 218-573-3842.

Brach: Federal Engineer of the Year!

Congratulations to John C. Brach, State Conservation Engineer, St. Paul, who was chosen as the NRCS Federal Engineer of the Year



for 2005. John and his wife, Kim, and Bill Hunt attended the luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington, DC on February 24, 2005 where John was presented this prestigious honor.

The Professional Engineers in Government (NSPE-PEG), a division of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE), administers this annual award program. Each federal agency that employs at least 50 engineers worldwide may select an agency winner, who then is entered into the competition for the overall award, Federal Engineer of the Year. The overall Federal Engineer of the Year is selected by a panel of judges established by NSPE-PEG who consider engineering achievements, education, continuing education, professional/technical society activities, NSPE membership, awards or honors, and civic and humanitarian activities. Minnesota NRCS is proud that John was the agency winner for 2005. Congratulations, John!

Minnesota NRCS Employees Test to See If the Best Is In the West

"12th Annual NOPBNRCSE Training Conference"

George Montgomery, Black Emphasis Program Manager

Minnesota employees gained a variety of training through their participation of the 12th Annual NOPBNRCSE Training Conference held in Sacramento, California. The conference which was "Western Diversity: Many Faces, Many Dreams, One Vision — Conservation" took place during December 13 - 17, 2004. The conference offered a unique opportunity for learning, networking, and sharing of ideas. Employees in attendance participated in selected concurrent sessions consistent with their documented training developmental needs. The courses offered covered a wide spectrum of employee interest. The developmental training courses scheduled, such as; Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP), Soil Data Mart, Effective Presentations, Financial Planning, and All in the Family, resulted in employees increased technical, personal, and social skills.

The opportunity of participating and learning about upcoming and ongoing developments in the NRCS was beneficial. However, interacting with colleagues from different locations of the same discipline is rewarding. Attending the NOPBNRCSE Training Conference allowed MN employees not only to learn in the classroom; it provided a forum for the building of relationships with colleagues that are non-members of our MN NRCS team that have the same mission, "Conservation".

NRCS and the Nature Conservancy moving forward with the WRP

Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a federally funded program offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and NRCS have worked closely over the last 5 years to utilize WRP at the Glacial Ridge Project. Glacial Ridge has now become part of the largest prairie restoration project in the world. The area has become known as Glacial Ridge Project, after the beach ridges that were formed by Glacial Lake Agassiz. Glacial Ridge is an immense prairie and wetland restoration project, located ten miles east of Crookston, in Northwestern Minnesota.

Wetland restoration efforts began on Glacial Ridge back in 2001. The Glacial Ridge property provides homes to dozens of waterfowl and upland bird species including the Sand Hill Crane, numerous duck species, and the Greater Prairie Chicken. Enrollments in the project provide a massive new habitat for these animals and diversity is sure to grow.

Ron Nargang of the Minnesota Nature Conservancy is presented with a check from MN NRCS for the purchase of easement rights on 5062 acres at Glacial Ridge Project near Crookston, Minnesota.



MN NRCS has now completed a purchase of easement rights with TNC through WRP on 5062 acres for \$2,394,468. The partnership TNC has had with NRCS has enabled more wetlands to be restored in NW Minnesota.

CTIC Crop Residue Survey Results

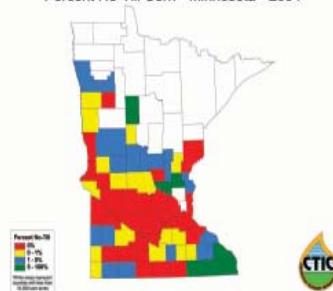
Robin Martinek, State Agronomist

The 2004 National Crop Residue Management Survey was released by CTIC and it confirms that in Minnesota, 667,700 acres are planted using a no-till system. This is 3.7 percent of the total planted acres and is an increase of 21.2 percent from 2002. The total number of acres planted using a conservation tillage system, meaning that farmers leave the stubble or residue from the previous crop to cover at least one-third of the soil's surface after planting (this includes no till, ridge till and mulch till) is 5,956,956. This is 33 percent of the total planted acres, up from 23 percent in 2002.

CTIC, who organizes data collection from each county in the U.S. says, "This Survey documents the fact that farmers are able to increase soil productivity, protect the environment and, at the same time, make a profit. With conservation tillage being used on 113 million acres nationally, up nearly 10 million acres from 2002, we know that more farmers than ever before are using conservation."

The Survey not only provides a snapshot of tillage usage for a year, it also tracks trends in adoption over time. All of the Minnesota data and information is available on the CTIC web site at: <http://www.ctic.purdue.edu/CTIC/CRM.html>. The login for Minnesota is **Minnesota CRM** and the password is **MN27**. Information is available by county and for the entire state of Minnesota.

Percent No-Till Corn - Minnesota - 2004



*Percent of Corn land
applied with No-Till
in Minnesota for
2004.*

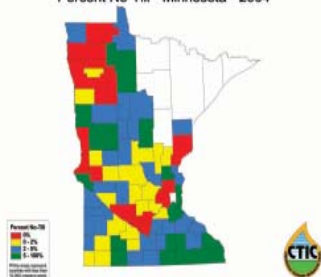
Bringing Emphasis to Personnel Matters

George Montgomery, Black Emphasis Program Manager

The Black Emphasis Program is a program that supports the goals of the Minnesota Civil Rights Program efforts in recruitment, development, retention, and maintaining a diverse work force. The Black Emphasis Program Manager (BEPM) for the state is George Montgomery, Jr.; District Conservationist in the Stillwater FO. He is a small town native of Lexington, Mississippi, now claiming Minnesota as home. The role of BEPM is to assist the agency head and Civil Rights Staff, to insure that equal opportunity is present in all aspects of NRCS programs and services. This includes assisting in the identification of under-representation which leads to positive action that addresses outlined problem areas. The BEPM also assists management officials to meet civil rights program goals and objectives through recruitment and retention efforts as well as insure effective communications among all persons and areas dealing with, or affected by, agency civil rights responsibilities.

In the state, the BEPM is quite active in various activities that support upper management and State Civil Right committee's goals. Currently, he serves dual roles as a State Civil Rights Committee member; Area 4 Representative and Black Emphasis Program Manager (BEPM). George said "serving dual roles is easy when you attend the same meeting scheduled for a single role." The opportunities provide a working knowledge of EEO/CR policies and responsibilities related to day-to-day activities as well as the agencies CR goals. He also stated that "serving as BEPM is rewarding because it allows me to assist in making the NRCS stay attractive to customers, colleagues, and potential colleagues." Recruitment and retention is a major part of the program. However, the success of the Black Emphasis Program is a reflection of Minnesota NRCS employees' effort in showing that Minnesota is a great place to live, work, and play.

Percent No-Till - Minnesota - 2004



*Percent of farmland that
was No-Till in Minnesota
for 2004.*

Percent No-Till Soybeans - Minnesota - 2004



*Percent of Soybean land
applied with No-Till in
Minnesota for 2004.*

"Soil erosion is as old as agriculture. It began when the first heavy rain struck the first furrow turned by a crude implement of tillage in the hands of prehistoric man. It has been going on ever since, wherever man's culture of the earth has bared the soil to rain and wind"

—Hugh H. Bennett and W.C. Lowdermilk, circa 1930's

AREA 1

Glen A. Kajewski, ASTC(FO), Thief River Falls, MN

NRCS works with Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians on EQIP Projects

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) assists America's private and tribal land owners in conserving their soil, water, and other natural resources. The Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians has been very active in utilizing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help improve the resources on the Red Lake Reservation.

Currently, Red Lake DNR and NRCS personnel are working cooperatively on three EQIP contracts totaling nearly \$600,000 in value. The EQIP program provided cost share support for the re-establishment of red and white pine timber stands, as well as several hundred acres of prescribed burns for timber stand and wildlife habitat improvement. Re-establishment of the pine stands utilizing EQIP funds is usually on land with marginal cover contributing runoff to sensitive wetlands, lakes and streams. EQIP has also helped provide funds that helped band members seal abandoned wells that were threatening the groundwater safety of Red Lake Band members. The Red Lake Band and the Red Lake DNR staff have also worked with NRCS staff developing and distributing educational pamphlets explaining resource concerns and conservation programs to band members and landowners in watersheds upstream from the Red Lake Reservation.

The joint effort to improve resources within the Red Lake Band's property and in its contributing watersheds has continued this year with an additional informational mailing begin sent out by the Red Lake DNR staff and with plans to submit an EQIP application for the Red Lake Band of Chippewa that is anticipated will total over \$300,000 in cost share funds.

Personnel

To further develop our working relationship with the Red Lake Band, NRCS has re-established an office loca-

tion in Red Lake. Leanne Langeberg, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, joined the staff at the Red Lake DNR office February 1, 2005. Leanne grew up in southern Minnesota, near the Twin Cities metro area. She is a graduate of Minnesota State University-Mankato with a degree in recreation and natural resources management. Leanne spent the last year in southern California where she worked as a Visitor Services Information Assistant in the Los Padres National Forest.

Wesley Drake will begin his new duties as a civil engineer working on the Glacial Ridge WRP project on March 21. Wes is a graduate of South Dakota State University in civil engineering and has worked for a construction firm, on the family farm, at his father's body shop and hails from the Madison/Bellingham area in Lac qui Parle County.

AREA 2

James R. Ayres, ASTC(FO), Fergus Falls, MN

Ladies Night April 7th!

Ladies Night is scheduled for Thursday, April 7th. The event will be held at the Wahpeton Eagles Club beginning at 5:30 p.m. The theme this year is "Conservation Knows No Borders". Jolene Brown, a premiere professional speaker brings humor, hope, and helpful ideas for the human and sometimes humorous side of agriculture, will be our guest speaker. 400 non-refundable tickets will be sold in advance beginning Monday, March 21st for \$8.00 each. Over 100 door prizes will be given away and a theme basket raffle will be held to help defray costs of the event. Contact Wilkin or Richland SWCD for more information or to register.

All 15 Area II NRCS Field offices are reporting that the EQIP sign up requests are exceeding the amount of County money available for contracts. Sharon Lean reports that she has 4 times her \$320,000 County allocation with 58 applicants seeking over \$1.2 million in conservation practice requests. Stan Musielewicz in Morrison County reports he has had 50 applicants competing for his \$400,000 allocation with total requests exceeding \$1.1 million as well. Area II Field staff are scrambling to allocate their EQIP contract dollars, complete the CRP plans for landowners accepted during the last general CRP sign-up, complete all the WHIP contracts, prepare for the new CREP and WREP's as well as get ready to embark on one of our newest endeavors – address the CSP workload anticipated to begin as soon as the sign up is announced which could be as soon as March 28th. Area II has March 28th and

29th set aside as CSP training days for all Area II NRCS staff that may have a hand in assisting with this effort.

Other: The Brainerd FO has been moved to Baxter, MN and their new address is:

NRCS
7118 Clearwater Road
Baxter, MN 56425

Personnel

Molly Costin was hired by the Wadena Co. SWCD, a portion of the CSP hotspot in Area II, as their new District Technician, effective January 24, 2005. Molly grew up in the New York Mills – Bluffton area of Otter Tail County.

The Crow wing Co. SWCD has recently hired Julie Weitzel as their new Administrative Assistant. Julie hails from the Willmar area and attended Bemidji State and Tarleton State in Texas. Also joining the Crow Wing Staff as the new NRCS Party Leader will be Dr. Wendy Greenberg, who is currently teaching at Bemidji State. Wendy will begin her new duties when she reports to duty mid-May.

Luke Johnson, a recent graduate from the U. of M. in Duluth, was hired as the new Pheasants Forever Program Technician for the Traverse Co. SWCD. Luke has been busy promoting continuous CRP practices and assisting landowners with conservation planning.

A hearty welcome to all our recent new hires here in Area II: To Molly, Julie, Wendy and Luke, welcome aboard!

AREA 3

B. Kevin Daw, ASTC(FO), Duluth, MN

Sustainable Forestry

Larry Nelson, Onanegozie RC&D



In the spring of 2004, the Onanegozie RC&D Council and its project partners were notified that they were awarded the first year of a two-year grant from the McKnight Foundation. The award continued the RC&D Council's earlier efforts,

also partially funded by the McKnight Foundation, to develop a self-sustaining, market-based approach to sustainable forestry in central Minnesota.

The McKnight Foundation has an abiding interest in protecting and enhancing water quality in the Mississippi River. Funding the Council's proposal offered a chance to positively impact water quality in the headwaters part of the river's watershed and encourage market forces to sustain the effort.

The project has four focus areas:

1. Expand local and regional markets for Forest Stewardship Council certified products that come from the region's certified forests.
2. Enroll more privately owned forestland in certification.
3. Expand the circle of participation by informing and educating Minnesotans how certification is helping to protect forests and water quality.
4. Develop case studies of activities that can encourage responsible forestry elsewhere within the Mississippi River watershed.

To support the project, the team is hoping to build an "eco-affordable" house in the city of Aitkin. The house will be an affordable, high-performance, sustainable house built to conform to the standards of the Green Building Council. The project will be used for training local businesses and seeks to acquire as much certified building materials locally as possible.

We're partnering with the Community Forest Resource Center and the Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation District to locate forest landowners, more than 2,900 acres so far, informing and educating them about certification and encouraging them to become certified.

Other highlights supported by the grant include: providing certification plan writing training to 15 public and private land natural resource managers, assisting a group of nine loggers to acquire chain-of-custody certification for their trucking operations, helping two forest landowner cooperatives to plan educational field days in 2005.



NO FOOLIN!!!

Steve Gorecky has put in 26.5 years with the Federal Government and is retiring on April 1st.

Personnel

Donna Walters-Nelson, SCT, Mora, Promotion, effective 01/09/05

Tom Gervais, SCT, Duluth, Promotion, effective 12/27/05

Ben Ellefson, CET, Duluth, Promotion, effective 11/14/05

Keith Christensen, SS, Milaca, Retired effective 01/3/05

Jerry Gorton, SS, Milaca, Selected as Pine County Soil Survey Project Leader, effective 01/9/05

Awards

Bob Korth, DC, Hinckley, Performance Bonus
Steve Haar, DC, Mora, Performance Bonus
Larry Nelson, RC&D, Mora, Performance Bonus
Mary Monte, DC, Cambridge, Performance Bonus
Paul Sandstrom, DC, Duluth, Performance Bonus
Steve Kluess, RC&D Coordinator, Duluth, Performance Bonus

Marc Diers, MLRA SS, Duluth, Performance Bonus
Barb Zeroth, WAE, Milaca, Keepsake award for extra effort in the Milaca FO

Steve Haar, DC, Mora, Keepsake award for extra effort in the Milaca FO

Mary Monte, DC, Cambridge, Keepsake award for serving as Acting DC in the Milaca FO

Tim Byrns, DC, North Branch, Keepsake award for serving as Acting DC in the North Branch FO

Julie Lindner, SCT, Hinckley, Keepsake award for serving as Acting DC in the North Branch FO

Larry Nelson, RC&D Coordinator, Mora, Keepsake award for assistance at the SWCS conference

Mary Monte, DC, Cambridge, Keepsake award for assistance at the SWCS conference

John Zinn, Grazing Specialist, Grand Rapids, Keepsake award for raising plants for training

Mike Walczynski, Area SS, Duluth, Keepsake award for extra effort to stock the Soils Data Mart

Marc Diers, MLRA SS, Duluth, Keepsake award for extra effort to stock the Soils Data Mart

Marge Sella, ETV, Coordinator, Keepsake award for the area with the largest number of ETVs

Mary Monte, DC, Cambridge, Individual Civil Rights award for 2004

AREA 4

Timothy A. Wilson, ASTC(FO), Brooklyn Center, MN

Wright County: Soil Survey CD Release Ceremony

The Wright County Soil Survey was finished in 1998 with subsequent releases of the SSURGO information made available to the public. In 2004 the manuscript and maps were finished and compiled in pdf format and released on a CD. In order to publicize the availability of the updated Soil Survey information, the NRCS took the opportunity to make a presentation to the Wright County Commissioners at their January meeting. Mr. Hunt delivered a brief address and along with Tom Jackson, former Wright County Update Soil Survey project leader, presented the

commissioners with a CD. The meeting was also attended by Tim Wilson (ASTC-FO), Jim Onstad (DC) and the Soil and Water Conservation District.



Personnel

Riley Maanum was hired as Soil Conservation Technician at Waite Park effective December 26, 2004.

Chee Lor, Student Trainee Soil Conservationist transferred from St Paul to Stillwater effective January 16, 2005.

Susan Williams was hired as a Soil Conservation Technician (WAE) at Elk River effective March 6, 2005.

Terry Meiller, District Technician joined the Carver SWCD in November 2004.

Dennis Rodecker, Wetland Specialist joined the Anoka SWCD in January 2005. Dennis worked for NRCS as a Soil Scientist in Michigan and more recently was employed by Peterson Environmental Consulting.

Annie Felix, Wildlife Habitat Technician joined the Benton SWCD in January 2005.

Marialice Arndt, Anoka SWCD Office Manager's last day is March 17, 2005. Marialice and her husband Richard plan to move to Duluth.

Jay Riggs, Urban Conservationist for Dakota SWCD has resigned. Jay has taken a position with Washington SWCD as Manager.

Awards

Pete Weikle, Brooklyn Center AO – Non Monetary Award Efforts in preparing documentation for the State Conservationist to present the finished digitized soil data information for the Wright County Commissioners.

AREA 5

Michael D. Appel, ASTC(FO), Marshall, MN

Big Stone County Final Service Center in Nation to Get High Speed Internet

Submitted by: Krecia Leddy, DC

March 1 marked the beginning of a new – and faster paced – era for the Big Stone Service Center in Ortonville. It was that date that several challenges area were recognized for their efforts in this project; Paul Bridgland, Cal Dunblazier, Gary Blough and Mike

Appel were finally overcome and the Service Center was upgraded from dial-up computer connection to a cable high speed computer line. Big Stone County is the final Service Center in the nation to receive a high speed internet connection.



The delay in the upgrade was the result of numerous challenges. Initially the local phone company Qwest deemed it would be too expensive to bring a new T-1 line into Ortonville. When a neighboring phone company was also contacted, this connection for a T-1 line – which is what most Service Center's use – would range at upwards of \$300,000. Because of those costs, a cable connection began to be researched by NRCS ITC staff. There were concerns of security and "static IP addresses," but eventually another USDA Service Center in the south-east had cable installed in January and this helped make the cable installation a reality for the Big Stone Office. Midcontinent Cable was contacted and discussions took place for the installation of cable at the Big Stone Service Center. The line was installed by Midcontinent Cable in late February, and ITC at Ft. Collins, CO made the cable line fully operational on Tuesday, March 1st.

The Big Stone Service Center reports that the upgrade has added efficiency to the office for staff and customers. Communication via e-mail and on-line reports has been improved, as has entering progress data for the agency and processing on-line applications.

Personnel

April Sullivan has been assigned to help assist the Redwood County office to get ready for the upcoming CSP sign-up.

Mark Rose, Redwood River CSP Watershed leader, Cheryl Isder, SC, April Sullivan attended the National CSP meeting in Omaha in February.

Awards

Several area employees were recently recognized with non-monetary spot awards for various outstanding efforts in the past couple of months; Dawn Madison, Steve Woltjer, Noelle Saeger, Joe Kristoff, Ray Genrich, Sandra Jerzak, Vonnie Nilges, Mark Rose and Mike Appel. Brain Pfarr, SCT in Redwood received a QSI and a plaque for outstanding work in 2004.

The annual Civil Rights group award was given to the Del-Clarke Lake Handicapped Accessibility parking, sidewalk and fishing pier project. Several employees in the area were recognized for their efforts in this project; Paul Bridgland, Cal Dunblazier, Gary Blough, and Mike Appel.

AREA 6

Kasey L. Reed, ASTC(FO), St. Peter, MN

Conservation and Compliance - What you need to know

Julie MacSwain, State Public Affairs Specialist

Nicollet, Minnesota - The Nicollet Conservation Club near Nicollet, Minnesota was the site of 2 successful Agricultural Producer meetings on March 8, 2005. Close to 100 farmers attended these meetings to learn more about Conservation and Compliance. "The meeting focused in on Conservation and Compliance - What you need to know, says Yamika Stokes, District Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), from the St. Peter MN field office.

The producer meeting was sponsored by members of the Nicolett county Soil and Water conservation partnership including Nicollet county FSA, NRCS < SWCD, and the Seven Mile Creek Clean Water Partnership. Clearly, the strong ability exhibited by the local Nicolett conservation partnership paved the way for a successful educational effort. Gary Wyatt, Regional Extension Educator from Mankato, Minnesota served as Moderator for the Farm Program meetings.

Kasey Reed, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations for NRCS's Area 6 spoke of the opportunities the new Conservation Security Program (CSP) would have for the agricultural producers of Nicolett County. "CSP is a new day in conservation History" said Kasey Reed. "No other conservation program recognizes and rewards farmers for on-going high levels of environmental stewardship". Farmers in Nicollet county have an excellent opportunity to participate in a program that will recognize the farmers for their outstanding conservation effort.

Additionally, Farmers attending the meeting learned more about the Wetland Conservation Act, CSP, EQIP and the importance of Conservation Compliance in Nicollet county, Minnesota. For additional information regarding the Conservation and Compliance meeting which was held in Nicollet, Minnesota, contact the St. Peter MN District Conservationist, *Yamika Stokes*.

Personnel**Good Bye**

Dennis Reimers has accepted the District Conservationist position in the Durand Field Service Center in Pepin County Wisconsin. Dennis will report to work on 03-20-05. Let us wish Dennis congratulations and much success as he ventures out in the next phase of his career. New Employees : Welcome to Area 6!!

Corinne Brenke, Accounting Technician located in Area Office, started her career with NRCS on January 10, 2005.

Josh Bork, started his full time position as a Soil Conservationist on January 10, 2005 currently located in Willmar.

Awards

Pat Bay received an Earth Team Volunteer jacket for making Area 6 “#1” in Minnesota by utilizing volunteer hours.

Brenda Tonn received a Certificate of Merit for her outstanding performance during FY04.

Krista Olson and Tom Peterson received non-monetary keepsake awards for their superior contribution to the training of NRCS employees in the design of Terraces on February 28, 2005.

AREA 7

John T. Nicholson, ASTC(FO), Rochester, MN

Fillmore County DC has great attendance at CSP Meetings

Sue Glende, Fillmore County District Conservationist, reports that she has had a total of 300 producers attend various CSP meetings in her county. During the months of January and February Fillmore County held eight meetings in various towns across the county. Glende is

proud to report that the turn out at these meetings was great and CSP seems to be attracting non-traditional NRCS customers, such as vineyard and orchard operators.

Fillmore County is a part of the Root River Watershed which was one of five watersheds in Minnesota that are eligible to sign-up for CSP in 2005. The Root's watershed includes land in Dodge, Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, and Winona counties. Glende feels that the Root River watershed was selected for CSP this year because of the large amount of diversity throughout the watershed, having karst topography and a large number of streams that need to be protected.

Explaining the CSP program to producers and distributing workbooks are the main priorities during the CSP informational meetings. During the meetings, producers are informed that the workbooks serve as a self screening tool. They are encouraged to work through the book to get an idea as to their qualifications to the program. Glende also explains that record keeping is vital for determining good management practices such as nutrient management.

CSP is a learning experience for NRCS employees as well as landowners; however Glende is proud to be setting a new chapter in history!

Excerpts of “New Federal Program Rewards Conservation Practices” by Lisa Brainard, Republican-Leader, were used in this article.

Personnel

Joseph Falkenberg received disability retirement effective 02/05.

John Beck was granted an Outstanding Performance for October 1, 2003 through September 30, 2004.

Send questions, comments, and contributions to:

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